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The Man About Tow

The Man About Town

BAKER'S DARKEY PLAYS

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THE MAN ABOUT TOWN.

WALTER H. BAKER & CO.
No 23 WINTER STREET
BOSTON

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BAKER'S DARKEY PLAYS

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THE MAN ABOUT TOWN

A Negro Farce in One Act

By E. BOWERS

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BOSTON
Walter H. Baker & Co.
1894

CHARACTERS.

JOSHUA SEEDS, *a tobacconist.*

ORLANDO SHORTCUT, *who would be his son-in-law.*

PETER PIPES, *the Man about Town.*

JOE BITTERS.

VIRGINIA SEEDS, *Seeds's daughter.*

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PROPERTIES.

Cane for SEEDS. Two letters for PETER. Spectacles. Gun for SEEDS. Gum-drops. Saw, hammer, etc., for SEEDS. One stovepipe bonnet. Dummy sign figure. Box for figure to stand on. Long counter. Bundles, cigar-boxes, broom, etc., for store. Jar with coffee, marked "snuff."

THE MAN ABOUT TOWN.

SCENE I. — *A street in one.*

(*Enter* ORLANDO, L.)

ORLANDO. I am more than half a mind to go before the mayor, and take an oath to burn and destroy all tobacconists in general, and old Seeds in particular. He has just refused me the hand of his daughter; kicked me out of the house, and locked his daughter in her room. My only plan now is to run away with her and get married in spite of him. But how to get a letter to her telling her of my plan.

PETER (*sings outside* L.). Halloa! there is my old friend Peter Pipes. He is just the man I want; but then he looks so shabby. Never mind; he can contrive some plan to get a note to her, I'm sure. (*Calls* PETER.) I say, Peter! Peter! come this way. I wish to speak with you.

(*Enter* PETER, L., *singing.*)

PETER. Why, Shortcut, how are you? You look as nice as a new barber's pole.

ORLANDO. Peter, where have you been this long time, and what makes you look so shabby?

PETER. Why, I saved up four dollars to go into business with, when I busted.

ORLANDO. What did you do with the four dollars?

PETER. I put it in the bank — Faro Bank.

ORLANDO. How did you succeed with your investment?

PETER. First-rate. I got in the poorhouse the next day.

ORLANDO. How did you get out of the poorhouse?

PETER. I knocked down the keeper and run.

ORLANDO. Well, Peter, I can put you in a way to make five dollars. Can I trust you?

PETER. I guess so; that's what they all do.

ORLANDO. Oh, no; I mean can I lodge a secret in your breast?

PETER. Well, I think so; that is, if the lodging was paid for.

ORLANDO. Why, have you no money — no blunt?

PETER. Blunt? What do you mean by blunt?

ORLANDO. Why money, — money is blunt. A shilling is blunt.

PETER. Oh, a shilling is blunt, is it?

ORLANDO. Yes. Now listen to me. I have a father.

PETER. Well, some people do have fathers at some period of their lives.

ORLANDO. I have a father who has threatened to cut me off with a shilling.

PETER. But a shilling ain't sharp enough.

ORLANDO. Why ain't a shilling sharp enough?

PETER. Because it's blunt. Ha, ha, ha!

ORLANDO. Never mind; my father has threatened to cut me out of his will because I fell in love.

PETER. Well, can't you get up again?

ORLANDO. No; I have pledged my love beyond redemption.

PETER. Redemption? I know him; he is a pawnbroker.

ORLANDO. Before this threat of my father's everything was all right; but the father of the girl I love heard of it, and to-day has kicked me out of the house, and locked his daughter in her room. Now, I wish to run away with her and get married, and I wish you to take a note to her. Will you assist me?

PETER. How much is the young lady worth?

ORLANDO. About forty thousand dollars.

PETER. Has she got any sisters?

ORLANDO. No; she is an only child. Why?

PETER. Well, I was thinking of marrying into the family myself if she had a sister.

ORLANDO. Well, well, will you assist me?

PETER. Make it five dollars and a quarter.

ORLANDO. Five dollars and a quarter be it, then. In the first place, I will write a note, which you must take to the young lady. But you must not let her father see you, and I think you will have to use stratagem to get into the house.

PETER. Stuttering Jim? I know him.

ORLANDO. Oh, no; I mean you will have to be very careful and not let her father see you.

PETER. Has the house got a door?

ORLANDO. Of course the house has got a door.

PETER. Then all I've got to say is, she will get the note.

ORLANDO. Then come this way, and I will instruct you further.

(*Exeunt both*, L.)

SCENE II. — *A chamber in two.*

(*Enter* OLD SEEDS *and* VIRGINIA R. *and* L., *meeting.*)

SEEDS. Well, my child, here you are, thinking of Mr. Orlando Shortcut, no doubt. I can tell you one thing, you never shall marry him.

VIRGINIA. But, father, why object to him; he is a dear, sweet man.

SEEDS. Sweet or sour, he don't get you. You must marry some one out of the common way.

VIRGINIA. But people who are out of the common way are not at all in my way.

SEEDS. No, no; your husband must be rich and a man of taste.

VIRGINIA. His taste I sha'n't dispute, for his love for me will prove his taste. (PETER *knocks* L.)

SEEDS. Go see who is at the door. (*Enter* PETER, L.) Well, whoever it is, he is coming in without waiting for an invitation. (PETER *has a letter which he tries to make* VIRGINIA *notice.*)

SEEDS. Well, sir, what do you want?

PETER. Does Mr. Cadwallader live here?

SEEDS. No; Mr. Cadwallader don't live here.

(PETER *makes signs to* VIRGINIA *which she does not see.* SEEDS *keeps his back towards* PETER *as much as possible.*)

PETER. A man told me this was his house.

SEEDS. Mr. Cadwallader don't live here, and this is not his house; and if that is all you want, the sooner you get out of this house the better, or I will have you kicked out.

(PETER *pretends to cry, rushes towards* VIRGINIA, *tries to have her see the note. She turns her back.*)

SEEDS. What is the matter with you? Why do you look thus wildly at my daughter, and burst into tears?

PETER. A man told me Mr. Cadwallader lived here, and I want to see Mr. Cadwallader, because if I see Mr. Cadwallader, Mr. Cadwallader will — (*Aside.*) I wish the gal would take this letter.

(*During this* OLD SEEDS *has been watching* PETER. PETER *holds the letter towards* VIRGINIA, *when* OLD SEEDS *seizes* PETER *and the letter.*)

SEEDS. What is this? A letter to my daughter, and from Orlando Shortcut? And you are the carrier, are you?

PETER. Yes. I am the mail — I am the blackmail.

SEEDS. I'll blackmail you. I'll stop your carrying letters.

PETER. It's against the law to stop the mail.

SEEDS. Where is my gun — sword — pistol — anything?

PETER. Here is a shoestring.

(SEEDS *gets his cane and beats* PETER *off* L.; *then crosses to* VIRGINIA.)

SEEDS. So, so; treason in my house, and you are at the bottom of it. I'll lock you in your room, and you sha'n't leave it until you are married, and married to please me.

VIRGINIA. But father, Mrs. Stitch, the dressmaker, will be here to-day. I hope you will allow me to see her.

SEEDS. I'll think of it. Come, away to your room, you ungrateful daughter! Come, in with you! (*Pushes* VIRGINIA *off* R., *and exit* R.)

SCENE III. — *A street, same as first scene. Enter* ORLANDO, R.

ORLANDO. Confound that fellow, how he stays! (*Looks off* L.) Ah, here he comes at last.

(*Enter* PETER, L.)

Well, Peter, how does our game proceed?

PETER. Our game's played out. I had a bad hand, and was beaten.

ORLANDO. Did not my letter reach the lady?

PETER. No; but the old man's cane reached me, and I've reached here, and I've got the worst of the bargain.

ORLANDO. In other words, you left his *cane* while you were *able.*

PETER. That's what I was just on the *eve* of telling you.

ORLANDO. Well, our bargain was, you were to deliver the letter, and I was to give you five dollars.

PETER. And a quarter.

ORLANDO. If you don't deliver the letter, you don't earn the money.

PETER. Well, I'll try once more, and if I fail this time, I'm no actor.

ORLANDO. Actor? Why, are you a spouter?

PETER. Yes; I spout everything I can get my hands on.

ORLANDO. Well, come this way, and we will have another trial of your skill. (*Exeunt both,* L.)

SCENE IV. *Chamber with window for* PETER *to jump through.*

(*Enter* OLD SEEDS, R.)

SEEDS. I have been watching to see if I could find any of the servants of Mr. Orlando Shortcut round here. The idea of his marrying my daughter! Why, the fellow has not got a penny in the world. What, marry the daughter of the Seeds family! Why, the fellow must be crazy. Ah, here comes my daughter. (*Enter* VIRGINIA, R.) Well, my dear, I see you have at last gained strength enough to leave your room.

VIRGINIA. Yes, father; but is it not strange Mrs. Stitch, the dressmaker, does not come?

SEEDS. There you go again! It seems to me you think of nothing but Mrs. Stitch and that puppy Shortcut. But you never shall marry him; that you can be sure of.

VIRGINIA. But, father, you know that I love him, and —

SEEDS. Love him! You fall in love with every man you see. There was Mr. Somerset. As soon as you saw him, you were dead in love.

VIRGINIA. Now, father, you know he was rich, and a man of taste. But you would not let me marry Mr. Somerset.

SEEDS. No. Do you think I wanted my daughter to turn a Somerset? Never.

(*Knock outside. Enter* PETER *dressed as* MRS. STITCH, *with hoops, etc. In this scene* PETER *speaks in a female voice.*)

PETER. Good-day, my dear, will your brother have the kindness to leave us to ourselves?

VIRGINIA. My brother! Why, Mrs. Stitch, that is my father!

PETER. Excuse me; he looks so young, I thought it was your brother.

SEEDS. That's a very sensible dressmaker, and not bad looking. No, Mrs. Stitch, I could not leave the room. You must know that there is a young fellow pretends to love my daughter, and he has a low blackguard of a rascal engaged to bring letters to her, and I could not think of leaving. Besides, I could not think of leaving so beautiful, so charming, so interesting a lady as yourself without having some conversation with her.

PETER (*aside; natural voice*). I'll have the old thief arrested for keeping a disorderly house.

SEEDS. I cannot leave the room, but I will turn my back. (SEEDS *looks out of window.* PETER *crosses* R. *to* VIRGINIA. *During the following conversation,* PETER *has a tape and measures* VIRGINIA, *as if for a dress.*)

VIRGINIA. Ah, Mrs. Stitch, I'm not happy. I want a warm heart —

PETER. A warm heart? You have got tongue enough, but you want more pluck. What will you have, a sheep's tongue or a beef's heart — which?

VIRGINIA. You don't understand me. I want sympathy.

PETER. I havn't got any sympathy, but I've got some hartshorn.

VIRGINIA. Ah! You are an artless, innocent creature.

PETER. Did you say you would have some hartshorn?

(PETER *pulls up his dress, as if to get at his pants pocket.* OLD SEEDS *watching them.* VIRGINIA *stops* PETER *and exclaims.*)

VIRGINIA. Pray, Mrs. Stitch, remember decorum.

PETER. De-co-rum. Yes; he is the one that told me to give the gal this note. (*Takes out note,* OLD SEEDS *watching.*)

SEEDS. Hang me, if that dressmaker hasn't got a note. I must watch them.

(PETER *goes up to* VIRGINIA *to give her the note. He puts his hand on her shoulder, and is supposed to get pricked by a pin.* PETER

exclaims in his natural voice, "Damn that pin!" OLD SEEDS *rushes between them, seizes the note, then grabs* PETER *by the skirts, beats him round stage with cane; the skirt tears off, leaving nothing on* PETER *but pants, hoops, waist, and bonnet.* PETER *runs for the window, jumps, and is caught with head out of window and heels in,* OLD SEEDS *beating him with cane as scene closes in.*)

SCENE V. — *Street, same as first.*

(*Enter* ORLANDO, L.)

ORLANDO. What can keep Peter so long? I suppose his last plan has failed with the rest. (*Looks off* L; *enter* PETER, L, *still in hoops.*) Well, Peter, caught again?

PETER. Yes; caught again. I don't understand these lover scrapes, so you must make some allowance.

ORLANDO. Thus far everything is a failure.

PETER. Well, I've got a plan to finish the job now. I want you to go down by the pump and wait until I come. (*Exit* PETER, L.)

ORLANDO. I have not the least doubt but this will fail with the rest. Never mind, I'll wait down by the pump. (*Exit* L.)

SCENE VI. — *Exterior of a tobacco store. Sign over door "Jacob Seeds." A sign figure, size of life, stands before the door, with long white coat, white hat, red shirt and pants the same as* PETER'S.

(*Enter* PETER, L.)

PETER. Here is old Seeds's house; but how to get in, that is the question. Let me see; I'll take the clothes off this old fellow, put them on, and then see what kind of a sign I will make. (*Takes the figure off the box. Exit with it,* L.; *puts on coat and hat the same as those on the figure; enter immediately.*) Now, I don't see but what I can make a good sign. I'll just stand on this box. The young lady may come out of the house or look out of the window; then I can give her the letter. (*Stands on box in the same position as the figure was.*) There, I guess I make as good a sign as any in the city.

(OLD SEEDS *appears at upper window in flat with a gun.*)

SEEDS. I wonder if there are any of the servants of Mr. Orlando Shortcut round here. If I see any of them, I'll blow their brains out. Hallo, there is my sign figure out-doors yet. I say Joe, Joe, take in the sign and shut up shop. (*Disappears from window. Enter* JOE *from house and takes* PETER, *who stands stiff, and carries him into house. Then returns and gets box, and exit into house.*)

SCENE VII. — *Interior of tobacco store; long counter with bundles tied up; three or four jars, one filled with ground coffee to represent snuff; a stove painted red to represent a very hot fire; a broom; a set window,* L. 3 E. *for* PETER *to jump through.* PETER *discovered standing on box near the stove; he is now representing the figure; makes business about the fire in stove being hot.*

PETER. Well, I'm in here at last. That fellow thought he was bringing in that old sign figure. Now, if I can only fool the old man it will be all right. Ah, here he comes now. (*Strikes attitude on the box same as the figure was.*)

(*Enter* OLD SEEDS, L., VIRGINIA, R.)

SEEDS. Now, Virginia, promise me that you will forget Mr. Orlando Shortcut, and I will give you a new bonnet, a new silk dress — and —

PETER. A soup ticket.

SEEDS. Eh? what did you say about soup?

VIRGINIA. Soup? I said nothing about soup.

PETER (*aside*). I wish she would put that old blower on this stove; it's getting mighty hot here.

SEEDS. I'll tell you what I am going to do with my sign figure. You know Mr. Brown the grocer, well, he has a Chinaman in his window with gas burning out of his mouth. Now, I'm a-going to take my sign figure there, bore a hole through him, put a gas-pipe into his head, stand him in my window, and light his nose.

PETER (*aside*). Not as I nose — on, old fellow.

SEEDS. Now, Virginia, you stop here, and I will go and get my implements and commence the job to-night. (*Exit* OLD SEEDS, R.)

PETER (*trying to attract* VIRGINIA'S *attention*). Pst! pst! say, come here. (VIRGINIA *looks round bewildered;* PETER *jumps off box; she screams.*) It's all right; don't make any noise. Mr. Shortcut sent me here; he is waiting for you down by the pump. Don't stop to talk, but away with you. (VIRGINIA *exit,* L.; PETER *looking round.*) Well, Old Seeds has got a nice store here. (*Goes up to counter and puts some of the bundles up the back of his coat; make any business here.*) I must look out; here comes the old man. (*Gets in position on the box same as before; enter* SEEDS, R., *with a hand-saw, hammer, etc.*)

SEEDS. I do think when I get my sign figure in the window it will be a great curiosity.

PETER (*aside*). You needn't take so many panes about that window; it's the last place I'll go into.

SEEDS. I'll commence the job at once. I'll clear off this counter and lay it down here. (*Goes to arrange counter; upsets the jar of coffee near the stove and under* PETER'S *nose; business of* PETER *trying not to sneeze;* SEEDS *says*). There goes a jar of my

best snuff. I'll just sweep it up a little. (*Gets broom and sweeps the coffee up by the box, under* PETER's *nose;* PETER, *business, etc.*)

SEEDS. Why, I left my daughter here; where can she be? (PETER *trying not to sneeze;* SEEDS *calls.*) Virginia, Virginia! Where are you? (*By this time* PETER *can hold in no longer; he commences to sneeze;* OLD SEEDS *looks at him thunderstruck;* PETER *jumps off of box, and runs down* L., *sneezing;* OLD SEEDS *stands trembling, looking at him,* R.)

PETER. It's all right, old fellow; I couldn't stand it any longer.

SEEDS. Hang me, if that ain't the dressmaker! (*Rushes* PETER *round stage;* PETER *jumps out of window; crash of glass, etc.;* OLD SEEDS *puffing and blowing, almost out of breath.*) This is another plot to rob me of my daughter. Where the deuce can she be? (*Calls.*) Virginia! Virginia!

(*Enter* VIRGINIA *and* ORLANDO SHORTCUT, L.; *they both hold out their hands to* OLD SEEDS.)

VIRGINIA. Here we are, father, and want your blessing! (*At this moment* PETER *puts his head in the window and exclaims.*) Shortcut, where is that five dollars and a quarter? (OLD SEEDS *seizes an armful of bundles from the counter;* VIRGINIA *and* ORLANDO *cross to* R.H. *as curtain lowers;* PETER *puts his head in and out of window;* OLD SEEDS *throwing bundles at him;* PETER *laughing at him; dodging the bundles, etc.*)

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SYNOPSIS.

ACT I. — The home in Finnigan's Alley, New York. Mrs. Finnigan's ambition. "And me a-dyin' to see the Italian Opery!" An unwelcome visitor. Rafferty's news. "Me wife's mother's uncle's aunt is dead!" On a strike. "What for I dunno. They said strike, an' we struck." Rafferty in hot water. Finnigan's song. His opinion of dudes. Tammany Hall. Pat the dainty. "He'll be axin' for pie next." Katy's reason. "Taffy." Katy gets mad. "What a nice, quiet time I'm having the day." The telegram. Fortune smiles. "Now I'll lick the Dutchman!" "Is dot so?" Tableau.

ACT II. — Finnigan's new home on Murray Hill. Mrs. Finnigan's trouble. How to speak "Frinch." Coney Island. The Count and Lady Hannah. A bit of scandal. "Katy's loyalty. "Begorry, the ould mon has wan friend left." High society. Snubs all around. Father and son. The bank check. A bashful lover. The proposal. "Don't you *dare* kiss me!" A pretty pair of swindlers. Lady Hannah's advice. A dangerous game. More snubs. Poor Finnigan's desperation. "I'll commit suicide av it costs me me life." Good advice. Tempted. "It looks like whiskey." Finnigan's assertion. A row.

ACT III. — The next morning. Finnigan a wreck. "I'm a blowed-up steamboat!" Husband and wife. Cold comfort. Jake brings startling news. The swindlers compare notes. Jake wants to fight. "Luff me got at him!" Finnigan steps in. "I can do me own slugging." The attempted murder. The surprise. Policeman Rafferty. Finnigan's vow. *Finale.*

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